

# SUPPORTING THE GWOT

He looked down to see blood coming through the grommets of his boot, reddening the fabric. "I didn't feel the pain. I just felt the impact. Like I kicked a rock. I thought, 'Something must have happened down there.'"

Immediately after the explosion, Asbery called out to see if Corona was all right. "I think I may have been hit," Corona yelled, analyzing the situation and determining if he was, in fact, hit. The blood was what scared him the most, he said.

The Navy medics attached to the Marine unit arrived quickly, Corona said, checking to ensure no major arteries were hit and moving him via stretcher to a nearby bridge, where he stayed for the night.

"They treated it as a routine," he said. "I just laid down on the ground with my feet up."

Corona still reflects on the incident. "I'm just glad the captain wasn't there," Corona said of Asbery, who had been standing exactly where the rounds hit. "They would have hit him if he'd kept talking to me."

Corona was the only one hit during the mission. While being X-rayed at Camp Anaconda, Corona recalled that he asked the examining doctor if he was going to take the shrapnel out. "They said no; 'it'll do more damage if we take it out.'"

Unsatisfied, Corona took advantage of a quiet moment later that day and, in the refuge of his room, "took a magnet out and, bloop, a couple pieces came out."

Today, several pieces remain lodged deep in his foot. Although they only cause him occasional pain, they continually remind him of the traumatic distress



*Photo by Christina Bohrmann*

**District employees then-Capt. Thomas Asbery and Pete Corona assess the damage to a bridge near Balad while deployed to Iraq as part of a Forward Engineering Support Team augmentee group.**

caused by war – not only on him, but on those with whom he served.

He has a new respect for Marines, he said, who conducted their mission nobly, despite the repeated assaults on their safety and on their good deeds helping rebuild the country.



*Photo by Christina Bohrmann*

**Pete Corona rests after being treated for an injury suffered during a mortar attack. The attack happened shortly after Corona and colleagues conducted a usability assessment of a bridge between Balad and Baghdad the Marines were tasked to protect.**





*Photo by Christina Bohrmann*

From left, District employees Christina Bohrmann, Pete Corona, and then-Capt. Thomas Asbery evaluate damage to a nearby bridge in March 2004 while deployed to Camp Anaconda for six months.

He admitted that he appreciates the award and what it stands for, but acknowledged that it kind of bothers him: "I'm walking. I'm OK. And other people are not," he said, mentioning the retribution that others who fought bravely for the country deserve.

He teared up while talking about this. "We did what we had to do to protect ourselves. That's it. You live with the threat and you accept it."

Corona said he is proud of his service both with the Air Force and with the Corps of Engineers and added that he would go back to Iraq in an instant, despite the dangers – especially with the Marines. "I would go anytime with them."

He said his foot doesn't bother him too much, now. "Maybe once in a while," he said, but not a lot.

The pain he most feels is in his performance on the soccer field. Corona said the injury has weakened his game and that he can't play like he used to. But he quickly wrote off the notion, saying, "I'm getting old anyway."



*Photo by Ivano Trevisanutto*

SETAF Commander Maj. Gen. Frank Helmick stands with Defense of Freedom medal recipient Pete Corona during the award presentation in Vicenza's Hall of Heroes Aug. 18.